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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-3701**

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
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June 12, 2018

Donald J. Trump  
The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write today because I am profoundly concerned about your administration's new "zero tolerance" policy to separate children from their parents who attempt to cross the U.S. border. When the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced last month that it would begin referring all unauthorized border crossers for criminal prosecution, it chose to needlessly expand the procedure of separating minor children from their parents. This approach is as cruel as it is misguided, and it should be abandoned.

Many of the individuals and families seeking protection at the U.S. border are fleeing horrific violence and have legitimate requests for asylum – a protection long enshrined in U.S. law. Prosecuting all individuals who cross the border, including those with valid claims for relief, does nothing to address the conditions that compelled people to flee their home countries and will not deter future migration. It will, however, undercut our nation's reputation as a refuge for victims of violence and oppression – often from countries hostile to our democratic values and institutions.

Worse are the consequences of criminalizing those seeking asylum, which results in jailing adults and new custodial arrangements for kids, with questionable oversight practices. Separating families as a punishment for seeking a safe future for themselves and their children through lawfully-established channels is deeply abhorrent and can lead to permanent harm to the health and well-being of these children. A 2016 report from a DHS advisory committee recognizes this, concluding it is never in the best interest of a child to be detained because of immigration status.

Since introducing this policy last month, your administration has separated more than 600 children from their parents, including children as young as 18 months. Having decided to separate and detain minor children, at the very least the Administration owes it to the American public and its elected representatives to disclose in detail the residential conditions of these children. I am appalled and disappointed by the failure to meet a request from my home state colleague, Senator Jeff Merkley, to visit and inspect a migrant detention facility in Texas. I intend on making and will encourage other Members to make similar requests to insist on adequate congressional oversight.

Incarcerating asylum seekers, separating families, and traumatizing children as a political calculus is unconscionable and reveals a mean-spiritedness that is chilling. These are children – not collateral to be used to dissuade further violence-induced migration and embolden anti-immigration zealots.

In the strongest possible terms, I implore you to end the ‘zero tolerance’ policy that criminalizes victims of violence, endangers child welfare, and fails to address the root causes of the problem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Suzanne Bonamici". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Suzanne" and last name "Bonamici" clearly distinguishable.

Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress